

By: Skye Lennox

# Building a Natural Habitat Garden



## Why create a natural habitat garden?

- Attracting wildlife, like birds and butterflies provides year-round enjoyment and wildlife viewing opportunities. Small patches of habitat that provide the basic needs of life - food, water, shelter - are becoming increasingly important to many species of wildlife. Only about 20 per cent of the habitat in southern and central Saskatchewan remains in its natural state. (*Wildlife Gardening in Saskatchewan, 1*)
- Once a natural habitat garden has been established it is low maintenance, but provides hours of enjoyment.



## How do you start to create your own habitat garden?

- The first step is to assess what you already have available to you. There is no need to tear everything out of your yard in order to start fresh when creating a natural habitat for wildlife.
- Create a map of the area that you are planning to transform.

Look at where existing trees are as well as structures such as a house or shed. Take high traffic areas into consideration. You would not want to force wildlife to have to cross a busy street in order to get to the garden.

- Use existing structures to your advantage. A thicket of raspberries would make an excellent home and food source. A tall tree would provide shade for plants that do not do well in direct sunlight. A boulder would be the perfect place for a butterfly to sun itself after feasting on the nectars in your garden.

- Once you have established what you already have, decide what sort of plants you would like to add to your garden. Try to stick to plants that are native to your region. These plants have adapted to your region. Also native plants require less maintenance as they grow naturally here.

- There are many books and websites that provide extensive information on plants that grow naturally in specific regions. These are an excellent source of inspiration as you begin to plan your natural habitat garden.

- Decide how you will start the plants in your new garden. There are many options. You can collect

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your own seeds or purchase them from companies that sell native plant seed, though these companies are rare at the present they are growing in number! You can propagate the seeds inside before planting them outside, or plant the seeds directly in the ground.

- Lastly enjoy the beauty of the oasis you have created as you sit back and watch your garden grow.



### Sources of Information on Habitat Gardening:

#### Books:

- *Wildlife Gardening in Saskatchewan*
- *Creating the Prairie Xeriscape* by Sara Williams
- *Woody Ornamentals for the Prairies* by Hugh Knowles
- *Gardening with Prairie Plants* by Sally Wasowski
- *Perennials for the Prairies* by Edgar W. Toop and Sara Williams
- *Saskatchewan Birds* by Allan Smith
- *Favorite Trees and Shrubs* By Lois Hole
- *Medicinal Wild Plants of the Prairie* by Kelly Kindscher
- *Butterfly Gardening* by E.O. Wilson
- *Northern Gardens* by Brian Andrews
- *Natural Landscaping and Designing with Nature Plant Communities* by J. Diekelmann & R Schuster
- *The Natural Garden; The Natural Shade Garden; The Natural Habitat*

*Garden; Making More Plants* all by K. Druse

- *Bobby Bluestem* by O'Grady
- *Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards* by S. Stein

#### Internet Sources:

- <http://www.hort.uconn.edu>
- <http://www.rook.org>
- <http://www.laspilitas.com/plants/544.htm>
- <http://www.cwnp.org>
- <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov>
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- <http://ag.arizona.edu>
- <http://maarec.cas.psu.edu>
- <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>
- <http://www.conservation.state.mo.us>
- <http://www.mystery.com>
- <http://www.ext.nodak.edu>
- <http://www.greatplains.org>
- <http://www.enature.com>
- <http://www.botanical.com>

